

Masthead Logo

The Iowa Review

Volume 15

Issue 2 *Spring-Summer: An Homage to Ezra Pound*

Article 24

1985

Late Afternoon in California

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Recommended Citation

Gregg, Linda. "Late Afternoon in California." *The Iowa Review* 15.2 (1985): 80-80. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3225>

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LATE AFTERNOON IN CALIFORNIA

We lived in the country when I was small.
I tried to make houses in the bay trees
and the live oaks, but it always got dark
and time for supper. Now my father is dead
and his name faded to a bruise. Mother
is on the porch reading an old letter of his
to prove he did not care about me. She says
it was because I was sexual as a child.
I remind her I always cut my hair short
and wore only boys' clothing. There was
something about the way you walked she says
and goes inside, saying there is nothing
to eat and she is tired of cooking.

THE GOD

In my book it says *Dionysos: Dendrites*
(*tree god*), *Anthios (god of blossoming things)*,
Braites, Sabazios. And tragedy (Tragos).
I go outside thinking of the gods in Greek.
The pony has been staked in front
of the farmhouse across the road and is racing
hard around at the end of the rope.
The young man sits on a granite stone
in front of his house. I did not see him
at first in the shade. I continue along
the side of our house toward the barn.
I look back just before I go around the corner.
He is riding the pony, his hands gripped
down near her mouth. Man on horse, I think.
He is doing this for me, I think,
although I could never admit it.